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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002063

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: BRIEFING THE INTERNATIONALS

Classified By: Political Counselor Michael J. Fitzpatrick, Reasons 1.4  
(B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador Bellamy briefed a small group of ambassadors and special envoys on U.S. policy toward Somalia on May 9. The group responded largely favorably to the briefing, with several finding areas of convergence between their policy priorities and ours. In response to concerns that a short-term counterterrorism focus could imperil long-term governance goals, the Ambassador emphasized that our efforts to eliminate the foreign terrorist threat inside Somalia were occurring concurrently with efforts to empower Somali governing institutions. We believe this meeting has opened the door to more productive coordination, commensurate with the anticipated expansion of our activities, with our counterparts on Somalia issues. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador was invited by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Somalia Francois Fall to address a session of the international contact group on Somalia on May 9. (NOTE: The contact group was established by Fall shortly after his arrival to serve as a discussion and advisory body smaller in scale than the international community group that meets regularly to discuss Somalia. END NOTE.) Present at the meeting were the Austrian ambassador (attending as current president of the European Union), the European Commission head of delegation, the Swedish deputy chief of mission, the Arab League special envoy for Somalia, the Arab League ambassador to Somalia, the African Union special envoy for Somalia, and the Kenyan ambassador to Somalia.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador provided the group an overview of current U.S. policy toward Somalia. Drawing on the outcome of the Deputies Committee meeting, the Ambassador outlined our priorities in the areas of security, humanitarian assistance, and institution building. He discussed the extent of our concern about the small number of foreign Al Qaida members finding sanctuary in Mogadishu, our willingness to work with anyone in Somalia who would help counter the terrorist threat, and our recent meeting with Ayr community leaders about weeding out the destructive foreigners in their midst. He acknowledged that the best long-term solution to the terrorist threat is to have a functioning Somali government, but the known activities and capabilities of the Al Qaida operatives are strong arguments against waiting for this ideal end-state. The Ambassador also informed the group of the extent of our assistance activities, both current and projected, highlighting the \$80 million in food aid provided thus far this year in response to the drought. He emphasized that we want to support the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), but for a variety of reasons are unable to do so

directly. We are, however, prepared to discuss individual projects and issues, such as piracy, on which we may be able to engage through mechanisms other than direct support to the government. The Ambassador in particular emphasized our desire to explore how more effective linkages can be established between groups in Mogadishu and the TFG.

¶4. (C) Responses to the Ambassador's remarks were generally favorable. The Arab League saw this meeting as the opening of a new chapter in dealing with Somalia and urged the group to work together to provide moral support to the fledgling governing institutions. The European Commission representative emphasized the need to work with the Somali Parliament. He further suggested that meetings such as this be continued on a regular basis. The Kenyan ambassador noted that the institutions in place are the best possible in Somalia at the moment, and all engagements should be directed through them. He expressed Kenya's concerns about the expansion of radical Islam in Somalia, particularly as extremists were re-establishing themselves close to the Kenyan border.

¶5. (C) The African Union envoy presented the only overt criticism of the U.S. ordering of priorities. He expressed concern about placing the short-term counterterrorism strategy ahead of the long-term goal of strengthening governance. The short-term goal, he believed, was damaging the long-term and the consolidation of the TFG instead needs to take priority. The Swedish representative agreed on the need to empower the government, but sought to identify constructive ways of achieving this as a common group. He urged the group to identify ways of reaching out to the renegade ministers in Mogadishu and urge them to play a constructive role. He suggested that international

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engagement on developing the National Security and Stabilization Plan (NSSP) could serve as an entry point to facilitate dialogue between the Baidoa and Mogadishu groups.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador assured the meeting participants that the U.S. agrees about the need to do everything possible now to empower the TFG. He emphasized the limits on what the international community could achieve, noting that we could offer encouragement and incentives for positive political behavior, but ultimately Somalis must make the changes necessary to create a functioning government. He expressed interest in the suggestion that the internationals try to use the NSSP as a tool for engagement. The Ambassador also inquired of the group whether they thought the TFG could serve a useful mediating role in the current conflict in Mogadishu. Regarding the recent fighting, he advised that we had conveyed messages to the Mogadishu warlords requesting that they not undertake any offensive moves. He reiterated that the U.S. is not attempting to combat all extremists in Somalia, only a small, tight group of foreigners.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Although very low key, this meeting was an excellent opportunity to inform international partners of our policy direction, dispel misinformation, and lay the groundwork for future cooperation. From this foundation, we hope to engage in follow-on discussions to determine what coordinated approaches may be possible to advance those goals we and our international counterparts have in common. END COMMENT.

BELLAMY